

## **Jesus' Kingdom Movement**

### ***The Gospel of Matthew***

#### **Advent Week 1: Jesus is Our Hope**

##### ***Matthew 1:1 – 17***

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##### **Introduction: The One Who Will Lead Us Home**

We are starting the four weeks before Christmas, which is called Advent in the Christian calendar. Advent means arrival or coming. On week 1, we are reminded of hope: that the birth of Jesus is our hope; that the coming of the Eternal Son of God into our human flesh, as one of us, is the embodiment of hope.

In fact, all of our deepest hopes point us to Jesus. This past Thanksgiving, as a family we had a great dinner. I made fresh cranberry sauce with rosemary, bourbon, and lemon -- so good. We had friends join us. We enjoyed lots of laughter and a few memories. Then we went to go see Black Panther Wakanda Forever. Then the next day, I discovered that our dishwasher broke. There's a slow drip behind the dishwasher that is making part of our kitchen floor warp and the water is going down into the basement. I thought, "Okay, I'll just do the dishes in the sink." I may have to fix the floor and sheetrock and some wood. Then I learned something else: The main water drain pipe in the basement is also broken, and a lot of water is leaking out anytime anyone in the house uses toilets, showers, sinks. I called four plumbers, and no one is available during Thanksgiving weekend, of course. So I had to wash my dirty dishes outside. Suddenly the rich red stains of my cranberry sauce were not very fun. Two leaks in my house, with damaged wood. Thanksgiving is not the time to have a problem with your toilets!!

##### **Relevance**

When home does not feel like home, we hope things can be fixed. When our relationships are strained or broken, we hope we can be fixed. When our bodies and/or brains are sick, we hope we can be fixed. When something in us is damaged, on the level of our soul, our character, we hope we can be fixed. When this nation feels irreparably damaged, we hope it can be fixed. Jesus embodies that hope for us. And we hope that there is a God who is good enough and loving enough to fix us.

And it goes the other way, too. The God of love and goodness draws near to us, even to live in us to make us His home, and there are some sweet moments. But after a lovely Thanksgiving dinner, we find we have a problem with the toilets, with the plumbing. Can God fix us? Does Jesus also fulfill God's hope?

##### **Text and Context**

We're going to look at the Gospel of Matthew, one of the four biographies of Jesus. And we're going to the family tree -- a genealogy -- of Jesus, because that is Matthew's way of introducing Jesus to his readers. But in this family tree is hope.

The Gospel of Matthew was probably the earliest of the four Gospels written. It is written by a Jewish Christian, to other Jewish Christians. There's a very Jewish style that runs throughout this book. So we're also going to see God's hope for a home on earth, God's hope for a human partner on earth who will fix what needs to fix the human heart itself to make God's home in human hearts possible. Because that is what the Jewish story teaches us. It's not just human beings who have hoped. God has hoped. And now the Son of God comes to be one of us, to be the human partner God has hoped for.

<sup>1</sup> The record of the genealogy of Jesus the Messiah, the son of David, the son of Abraham: <sup>2</sup> Abraham was the father of Isaac, Isaac the father of Jacob, and Jacob the father of Judah and his brothers. <sup>3</sup> Judah was the father of Perez and Zerah by Tamar, Perez was the father of Hezron, and Hezron the father of Ram. <sup>4</sup> Ram was the father of Amminadab, Amminadab the father of Nahshon, and Nahshon the father of Salmon. <sup>5</sup> Salmon was the father of Boaz by Rahab, Boaz was the father of Obed by Ruth, and Obed the father of Jesse. <sup>6</sup> Jesse was the father of David the king. David was the father of Solomon by Bathsheba who had been the wife of Uriah. <sup>7</sup> Solomon was the father of Rehoboam, Rehoboam the father of Abijah, and Abijah the father of Asa. <sup>8</sup> Asa was the father of Jehoshaphat, Jehoshaphat the father of Joram, and Joram the

father of Uzziah.<sup>9</sup> Uzziah was the father of Jotham, Jotham the father of Ahaz, and Ahaz the father of Hezekiah.<sup>10</sup> Hezekiah was the father of Manasseh, Manasseh the father of Amon, and Amon the father of Josiah.<sup>11</sup> Josiah became the father of Jeconiah and his brothers, at the time of the deportation to Babylon.<sup>12</sup> After the deportation to Babylon: Jeconiah became the father of Shealtiel, and Shealtiel the father of Zerubbabel.<sup>13</sup> Zerubbabel was the father of Abihud, Abihud the father of Eliakim, and Eliakim the father of Azor.<sup>14</sup> Azor was the father of Zadok, Zadok the father of Achim, and Achim the father of Eliud.<sup>15</sup> Eliud was the father of Eleazar, Eleazar the father of Matthan, and Matthan the father of Jacob.<sup>16</sup> Jacob was the father of Joseph the husband of Mary, by whom Jesus was born, who is called the Messiah.<sup>17</sup> So all the generations from Abraham to David are fourteen generations; from David to the deportation to Babylon, fourteen generations; and from the deportation to Babylon to the Messiah, fourteen generations.

### **What's the Problem? Exile from the Garden**

Like some family photo albums, we start with a big family photo. In this case, Matthew goes back far. Verse 1 says, "An account of the genealogy of Jesus the Messiah, the son of David, the son of Abraham." Luke's genealogy traces Jesus' humanity through Mary, going all the way back to Adam. Matthew's genealogy traces Jesus' claim to royalty through Joseph. When Queen Elizabeth died, and Prince Charles became King Charles, we wondered, "How does royal succession work? When is it going to come to Prince Harry and Megan Markle? What about MEGAN MARKLE???" So, of course Jesus had to be part of the royal line through his adoptive father Joseph. Because Jesus claimed to be the king of the Jews, so he had to be a son of King David through the royal line. That is one reason why Matthew writes this genealogy.

The other is to remind us of the problem from which Jesus came to save us. What is that problem? The exile, and the human nature problem that made God exile us from the garden. That's what v.17, the end of this section, shows:

17 So all the generations from Abraham to David *are fourteen generations*; from David to the exile to Babylon, *fourteen generations*; and from the exile to Babylon to the Messiah, *fourteen generations*.

Exile means to not be in the Garden of Eden. And because we are exiled, home does not quite feel like home. There is a deeper problem to be fixed.

Let's start with the bigger picture explanation, and a deeper explanation. All humanity was in exile from the original garden. We were supposed to partner with God in bringing forth life. Instead, we took into ourselves a sin-sickness: the delusion that we can be our own gods and define good and evil for ourselves from ourselves. So God exiled us because He didn't want anyone to make the sin-sickness immortal. So that is why we always have the feeling that home is not home, that our bodies are and are not the bodies that we were meant to have, that our relationships are and are not quite what they were meant to be. We were supposed to walk in the garden and spread the garden and have the protection of the garden and enjoy the beauty of the garden. Instead, we have to fix the plumbing at the WORST POSSIBLE TIMES.

J.R.R. Tolkien, the author of *The Lord of the Rings*, wrote, "We all long for Eden, and we are constantly glimpsing it: our whole nature at its best and least corrupted, its gentlest and most human, is still soaked with the sense of exile." (*Letters of J.R.R. Tolkien*, p.110). Our home is not yet home.

So why did God create Israel? Why not just jump right to Jesus? Because God works with human partners, always. And because God needed a people who hoped. So God called Abraham and Sarah to be a new Adam and Eve in a new garden land, to be His partners. Which is why this genealogy starts with Abraham, and implicitly, Sarah. He said, "Circumcise your hearts, O Israel" (Deuteronomy 10:16): cut that thing away from your hearts that shouldn't be there -- the sin-sickness. But they couldn't. Even King David, who was to be the most faithful among them, couldn't. King David prayed, "Create in me a clean heart, and renew a right Spirit in me (Psalm 51:10). So they too went into exile. They lost the garden life, even when they were home in the land, somehow the land wasn't healed, and human hearts were not healed.

Jesus came to put the garden back in us (Isaiah 58:11 - 12), to grow the fruit of God's Spirit in us (Romans 7:4 - 5; Galatians 5:22 - 25), to heal the human heart and make it God's home on earth, first in himself, then in us, and then bring the true home of humanity and God back to earth. No one else did that. No one else could do that.

### **What's the Problem? Even King David Couldn't Overcome It**

Even the greatest heroes of Jewish history couldn't, which is why King David is highlighted here. That's why some of the greatest of the kings are highlighted here. It's easy to idolize ordinary people, isn't it?

Illus: A lot of people were hoping that Elon Musk could solve free speech by buying Twitter. In our capitalist society, we tend to think that billionaires must be smart. So a billionaire like Elon must be able to run Twitter, right?!? So far, he has totally bombed. People should have known. Just look back at how Elon ran Tesla. Did Tesla workers have free speech to unionize? No. Then on Twitter, when people criticized Elon, he shut down their accounts. So much for free speech. Capitalists can't even solve capitalism. How can they solve free speech? And how can anyone solve human nature?

David was supposed to be a humble king, a king who built a temple for God as a kind of temporary home for God's glory to rest, a king who brought God as close as possible to himself and to the people. But did he? No? And Matthew reminds us that David abused his power. In v.6, Matthew introduces David this way: "And Jesse [was] the father of King David. And David was the father of Solomon by the wife of Uriah." Notice Matthew doesn't name Bathsheba. That's not an accident. Matthew names three other women in this genealogy: Tamar, Rahab, and Ruth. But here, we have to remember that David committed adultery and abused his power and committed rape by coercing "the wife of Uriah" to his bed. God had already promised David to keep the throne in his family line, which was the only reason that God honored that dynasty. But it's clear that the true and final Son of David would have to be way more faithful to God than the original David.

This is why hoping is different from being entertained by someone entertaining. We need Advent because our culture just wants us to be entertained. Hoping is not being entertained. Hoping is not feeling good by buying stuff or stuffing your face.

Back then, it must have been hard for the Jewish people to hope because the Roman Empire was so powerful, and people were so disappointing. That's why Matthew weaves hope into the genealogy. He does that by repeating the number 14. The name David has the numerical value of 14. That's because in Hebrew, the name is dalet-vav-dalet. In biblical Hebrew, consonants are written, and vowels are implied. The letter "d" or "dalet" has the value of 4. The letter "v" or "vav" has the value of 6. And we have a second "d" which has the value of 4 again. So the name "David" has the value of 14. That's why Matthew codes the number 14 into this genealogy. He repeats it over and over. Because he's doing CPR on our hearts. "C'mon, hope. God promised to David and his heirs that one will come forth who would bring us home." It's not about David the man. It's about God -- God promised David that the truest Son of God would come to rebuild the throne. And now that Jesus lived, died, and rose, he is drawing all people to himself.

Illus: I shared back in October that my mom passed away unexpectedly in early October. One thing that has happened since then is that my dad blamed me for it. He started off by saying that I didn't pay enough attention to Mom. Of course, I felt attacked. And I was tempted to just chew out my dad. But I hoped in what Jesus is doing right now. And when Jesus calls a person to himself, usually that person feels some regret about something. So I asked my dad if he had any regrets about the way he treated Mom. My Mom and Dad got divorced back in 1994. He has barely had any contact with her. He has lived in my house since April of 2021 because he was starting to fall down in his own condo. And my mom lived 10 minutes away and they didn't enjoy seeing each other. He brought up one thing that he regretted about the way he treated Mom. I also shared that I had a few regrets, but with Jesus, I was glad that he is making me a better version of myself. Having a few regrets is part of that learning journey. So I was able to share about Jesus, and how I relate to him. And we are not done with that conversation.

So our challenge is to hope in Jesus. To hope, when we feel attacked. To hope, when we feel despair. To hope, when we just want to be entertained. To hope, and not just take a break. To hope, and not just eat carbs this Christmas to feel better.

### **Why Is Jesus Our Hope? He Includes Us**

Matthew reminds us to hope by highlighting three people who hoped for Jesus most of all: the three women who are the foremothers of Jesus: Tamar the Canaanite, Rahab the Canaanite, Ruth the Moabitess. When we read Scripture, you read those names. Bathsheba is important, too, but in this regard, unfortunately she did not have a choice. Tamar, Rahab, and Ruth chose to hope for Jesus.

Why would Matthew mention these women in particular? They are all Gentile women. These 'mothers' of Jesus represent how Jesus would more fully welcome the Gentiles into his kingdom. They gave their humanity to Jesus, and he took it up in himself. We must give our humanity to Jesus, in his maturity, so that he would take us up on his shoulders and bear us. Jesus called Gentiles before he was even born. Jesus calls all Jews and Gentiles now that he sits on the throne.

Jesus is our hope that we can return from exile. Jesus is God's hope that a human would not exile Him, but would welcome Him home.

The Christmas hymn says:  
O come, O come Emmanuel  
And ransom captive Israel  
*That mourns in lowly exile here*  
*Until the Son of God appear*  
Rejoice! Rejoice!  
Emmanuel has come to thee, O Israel!